

THE  
P R O F I T  
O F  
B E L I E V I N G,

Very usefull.

Both for all those that are not yet  
resolved what Religion they  
ought to embrace :

And for them that desire to know  
whither their Religion be  
true or no.

*Written by S. Augustine.*

---



---

L O N D O N,  
Printed by R O G E R D A N I E L  
In *Love's* Court, near *Pauls*  
Church-yard.  
1651.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

1911

1875

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

[illegible]

OFFICE OF THE  
SHERIFF

1900-1901

11-10-1941

3000

1873

0-76

AP-1





## *The Preface,*

*To the well-disposed READER.*

*Learned Reader,*

**I** Know thou art not ignorant, that of all the affairs and businesſes in this world, there is none of that consequence and importance unto thee, as the ſaving of thy ſoul : and that our Bleſſed Saviour who knew beſt of all the ineſtimable value thereof, and vouchſafed to redeem it at ſo dear a rate as with his own precious blood, plainly declared the importance thereof, when he ſaid in the Goſpel, *Mat. 16. 16. What is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the world and looſe his own ſoul? Or what ſhall he give in exchange thereof?*

## The Preface

of? Wherefore let me advise thee to seek out and embrace the true Faith and Religion, for that *without such a Faith* (according to the Apostle, *Heb. 11.6.*) *it is impossible to please God*, and without pleasing of him, it is impossible to be saved. If thou thinkest that thou hast found out the truth already, and that thou dost embrace it, then give me leave to tell thee, that the world at this present abounds with an hundred heresies at least the *embracers whereof shall not* (according to S. Pauls doctrine, *Gal. 5.20.*) *inherit the kingdom of God*, and yet (as the same Apostle doth affirm, *Ephes. 4. 5.*) there is but *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptisme*: so that it is an hundred to one, but that thy Faith and thy Religion are false, and thy salvation is in danger thereby. Is there not then great reason that thou shouldst well consider, whither the Faith  
and

## *The Preface.*

and Religion which thou embracest be true or no, when upon this resolution depends thy fruition of unspeakable blisse, or intolerable suffering of endlesse pains for all eternity? How to find out the true Faith & Religion it is a matter of very great difficulty, not onely by reason that there are many faiths and religions in the world, and of all these there is but one true, and all the rest be false, but also for that the controversies debated now adayes are so many, and so intricate, that few have leasure to study them, and fewer ability to conceive and understand them: yet the zeal of learned Writers hath not been wanting to satisfie men herein. But what age since the Apostles dayes hath brought forth any man so able to perform so great a task, as was that incomparable Doctor S. *Augustine lib. 3. de Eccles. fol. 170.* who (as Doctour

## The Preface.

Field asserteth ) was the greatest and chiefeſt of the ancient Fathers, and the moſt famous of all the Divines which the Church hath had ſince the Apoſtles time : and as Doctour Covell affirmeth in his answer to Maſter Burges pag. 3.) hath farre excelled all others that have been or are like to be hereafter (thoſe onely excepted that were inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt) both in Divine and Humane knowledge. What man ſince the Apoſtles dayes, could ever ſo well diſcern true doctrine from falſe, truth from errour, and true faith from hereſie, as could that great S. *Auguſtine* who did not onely like another *David*, fight againſt the *Goliath* of one hereſie, but like another *Joſhua* fought the battels of the Lord againſt all the force and power of hereſie in his dayes, for forty years together? Wherefore if this great Doctour ſhould have

## *The Preface.*

have left any advises or instructions behinde him unto any of his dear friends that were then hereticks, whereby he taught them how to find out the true faith and religion, amongst so many heresies, ought not such instructions to be greatly desired, and if any such could be found to be highly esteemed, and diligently perused? Surely thou wilt say, that coming from so great a Doctor, and being so proper and necessary for these times, without doubt they ought. Why then Learned Reader, give me leave to present unto thee a learned Treatise of his, which he sent unto his dear and learned friend *Honoratus*, to draw him from the Manichean heresie to the true Religion; I durst not presume to tender it unto thee in this poor English habit, were I not confident that thou seekest more after the true Religion and the saving of  
thy

*The Preface.*

thy soul, then after vain eloquence;  
& the *enticing words of humane wisdom*; 1 Cor. 2. 4. but I will assure thee, under this poore attire thou wilt find a rich and a learned discourse of great *S. Augustine*, not onely very profitable for those that are not yet resolved in point of Religion, but also for them that dere to be satisfied whither the faith and Religion which they embrace, be true or no. If the stile be displeasing and ungratefull unto thee, know that very many of the African Fathers have harsh stiles, besides consider how hard a matter it is to teach a native African to speak true English.

In this work, first he shews how the old Testament is to be expounded, and defends the Authority of it against the Manichees that rejected it. Secondly he overthrowes that Manichean principle. That nothing

### *The Preface.*

is to be believed in point of Faith which is not first by reason made manifest and evident unto the Believer. In the third place he adviseth fervent and frequent prayer, peace and tranquility of mind, and a sequestration of affections from terrene things, as aids necessary for the finding out the truth: then declaring that Christ hath raised a very great and a famous Church consisting of all Nations, which is to continue very visible and conspicuous even to the worlds end, he exhorts *Honouratus* to addresse himself unto the Pastours and Teachers thereof, and to learn of them the true faith and Religion.

This way of proceeding to find out the truth, is far more short and easie then by the examination of all the points of controverted doctrine by their conformity to the holy Scriptures, for it consists in two points onely.

### *The Preface.*

onely, first, in seeking out which of all the Churches is the Church of Christ, and secondly, whither this Church can erre or no.

For the finding out of the Church S. *Augustine* proposed four marks unto *Honoratus*, Unity, Universality, Sanctity, and Apostolicall Succession, the which are set down very plainly in Scripture.

The Unity of the Church is twofold, in body, and in faith; in regard of the first, our Saviour saith, his Church is *one fold* and hath *one shepherd* Joh. 10. 16. and the Apostle calls it *one body*, 1 Cor. 12. 13. In respect of the second, S. *Paul* earnestly exhorted the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 1. 10. *to speak the same thing, and that there be no division amongst them: but that they be perfectly joyned together in the same mind and in the same judgement:* and he beseeched the Ephesians *to endeavour*



## *The Preface.*

*to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, Ephes. 4. 3, 4, 5. affirming that there is one body and one spirit, one hope of their calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptisme; and the Scripture testifieth that in the Apostles dayes the multitude of Believers were of one heart and of one soul. Acts 4. 32.*

The Universality of the Church is also twofold, in time and in place; this later was foretold by the Prophet *Moses* relating Gods promise made to *Abraham* of an ample posterity, and that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in his seed: *Gen. 22. 18. Gal. 3. 8.* by the Royall Psalmist, declaring that God the Father would give unto his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for his possession, *Psal. 2. 8.* and that he should have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends  
of

### *The Preface.*

*of the earth : Plal. 72. 8. and by the Prophet Isaiah, affirming that all nations shall flow to the mountain of the Lords house, Isa. 2. v. 2. For the accomplishment of these Prophecies our Blessed Saviour declared, Luke 24. v. 44. that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalmes, concerning him : and v. 47. that repentance and remission of sinnes, should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem; and for the performance hereof, he gave a commission unto his Apostles to teach all nations, Matth. 28. 19. and to preach the Gospel to every creature, Mar. 16. v. 15.*

That the Church of Christ should be universall for time, and continue perpetually unto the worlds end, it was plainly foretold by the Prophet Isaiah, who speaking of our B. Saviour,

our,

## *The Preface.*

our faith, that of the encrease of his government and peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom shall he sit to order it, and to establish it with judgement, and with justice from henceforth even for ever; and that no doubt may be made of the performance hereof, the Prophet addes, the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this. And by the Prophet Daniel affirming that in the dayes of those Kings shall the Col of heaven set up a kingdom which shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever, Dan. 2. 44. All which was confirmed by the Angel Gabriel, saying, The Lord shall give unto Christ the throne of his Father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob, and of his kingdom there shall be no end, Luke 1. ver. 32, 33. For the

## *The Preface.*

perpetuall settlement and establishing of this Church, Christ said unto S. Peter: *Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,* Matth. 16. 18. Touching the sanctity of the Church of Christ, God by the Prophet Ezekiel saith, *I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore: and the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctifie Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore,* Ezek. 37. v. 26, 28. and by the Prophet Malachi, Mal. 1. 11. *From the rising of the sunne, even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles: and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a peace-offering.* Unto this sanctity our Blessed Saviour exhorts us, saying, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorifie your*  
Father

## *The Preface.*

*Father which is in heaven, Matth. 5. 16. and Mark 7. v. 13, 14. Enter ye in at the strait gate, for strait is the gate, and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. And teaching how to distinguish the good from the bad, he saith, v. 20. By their fruits ye shall know them. As for Apostolicall succession, S. Paul saith, Ephes. 4. v. 11, 12, 13. that Christ gave some Apostles, and some Prophets: and some Evangelists, and some Pastours and teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come into the unity of faith, and of the unity of the Sonne of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulnesse of Christ, that is, ( as Doctour Fulk against the Rhem. Test. in Ephes. 4. sect. 4. fol. 335. and Mr. Calvin in his Instit.*

### The Preface.

cap. 8. *de fide*, sect. 37, 38. pag. 233.  
234. do expound ) for ever.

As for the second point, whether the Church of Christ can erre or no, S, *Augustine* saith, that neither the violence of heathens, nor the subtilty of hereticks can overthrow it, which agrees with our Savionrs promise, Matth. 16. 18. that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*; and, to preserve her from all errour and heresie, *Christ promised to be alwayes with her even to the worlds end*, Matth. 28. 20. and God made this covenant with her: Isa. 59. 21. *My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever*; by which words (saith Mr. Calvin in Comment. hujus loci) God promiseth that the Church shall never

ver

## *The Preface.*

ver be deprived of this inestimable benefit, to be governed by the Holy Ghost, and to be supported by heavenly doctrine: and to this effect he sent down the Holy Ghost to teach the Church all truth and to remain with her for ever, Joh. 16. 13. Joh. 14. 16. Thus thou seest how S. Augustines instructions for finding out the truth are grounded in Scripture, but more expressly in S. Pauls doctrine, who tells us, Rom. 10. 17. that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing is by the word of God; if we ask him how men may come to heare the word of God, he answers, v. 14, 15. *How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach unlesse they be sent?* So that faith is bred in men by hearing and believing the word of God, made known unto them by preachers lawfully sent: which preachers (as he saith to the Ephesians) Ephes.

## *The Preface.*

phes. 4.v. 11, 12, 13. are alwayes to be found in the Church of Christ, and are placed there, ver. 14. that from henceforth we be no more children tossed to fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleighs of men, and cunning craftinesse whereby they lie in wait to deceive; which is an office that cannot be performed by men that are frail and subject to errour, unles the Lord by his divine assistance, doth preserve them from erring. Doctour Field having considered the facility and solidity of this method, doth advise all those to practise it, that desire to be satisfied in matters of Religion in these terms, Epist. dedic. of the Church. Seeing the controversies in our time are grown in number so many and in nature so intricate, that few have time and leisure, fewer strength of understanding to examine them: what remaineth for men desirous of  
satisfac<sup>n</sup>



## *The Preface.*

*satisfaction in things of such consequence, but diligently to search out, which amongst all the societies of men in this world, is that blessed company of holy ones, that household of faith, that Spouse of Christ, and Church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of truth: that so they may embrace her communion, follow her directions, and rest in her judgement? Now that thou maist be the better able to follow this wholesome counsell, let me advise thee with care and diligence to peruse this ensuing treatise, and that thou maist receive much benefit thereby for thy souls health, thou hast already the prayers of S. Augustine, and thou shalt have the hearty wishes and desires of*

*Thy charitable  
Welwisher.*

*A. P.*

Chap.	The TABLE.	Page.
I.	<b>H</b> ow S. Augustine came to be deceived by the Manichees.	I
II.	That the Manichees do condemn the old Testament.	II
III.	Of the four wayes of expounding the old Testament.	15
IV.	3. wayes whereby men fall into errour.	31
V.	Of the truth of the holy Scripture.	37
VI.	That the holy Scripture is first to be loved before it can be learned	42
VII.	That we ought not to judge rashly of the holy Scriptures : and how , and with what care and diligence the true religion is to be sought for.	49
VIII.	Of the way to the instruction of piety : and of the wonderfull pains S. Augustine took to find it out.	63
IX.	Of Credulity.	68
X.	Why Credulity is the way to Religion	75
XI.	Of understanding, belief, and opinion	83
XII.	That it is the safest way to believe wise men.	93
XIII.	That Religion takes her beginning from believing.	98
XIV.	That Christ chiefly exacted belief	104
XV.	Of the most commodious way to Religion.	114
XVI.	That miracles do procure belief.	117
XVII.	The consent of nations believing in Christ.	124
XVIII.	The conclusion by way of exhortation.	129



## The Profit of Believing.

### CHAP. I.

*How Saint Augustine came to  
be deceived by the  
Manichees.*

*O Honoratus,*

**I**F any Heretick, and a  
man believing Here-  
ticks did seem unto me  
to be one and the same  
thing ; I should think fit to be si-  
lent at this present, and to abstain  
both from speaking and writing in  
this cause : But now where-  
as they do verymuch differ ( For  
he is an Heretick ( according to  
my opinion ) who for some tempo-  
B rall

rall benefit, and chiefly for glory and his own preferment, either broacheth or followeth false and new Opinions: but a man believing Hereticks, is one that is deluded with a certain imagination of Piety and Truth) I held it to be my duty to deliver thee my opinion, touching the finding out and embracing the Truth, with the love whereof we have both (as thou knowest) been greatly enflamed even from our youths. Truth is a thing farre differing from that which vain men do conceive, who having too deeply settled their affections upon these bodily and corporall things, do hold and imagine it to be nothing else, but what they do perceive and discern by those five most known Messengers of the Body: and they tosse to and fro and rerevolve in their minds the impressions and  
images

images which they have received from these things, even when they endeavour to disbelieve their senses : and by a deadly and a most deceitfull rule taken from thence, they think that they do frame a right and perfect judgement of the ineffable Secrets and Mysteries of Faith. There is nothing more easie (my most dear friend) then for a man not onely to say, but also to think that he hath found out the Truth : but how extream hard it is to find it out indeed, thou wilt ( as I hope ) acknowledge and confesse upon the perusall of these my writings ; which that they may prove beneficiall unto thee, or at least not hurtfull, and unto all those into whose hands they may chance to light, I have beseeched the divine Majesty, and I do beseech him, and I hope it will come to passe, if mine own conscience can

but bear me witnesse that I came to write them not with a desire of vain renown or frivolous ostentation, but with a pious and a serviceable mind. My intent therefore is to prove unto thee, if I can, that it is sacrilegiously and rashly done of the Manichees, to speak bitter words and inveigh against those, who following the authority of the Catholick faith, are fortified and strengthened beforehand by believing, and are prepared to receive the light of the Divine grace, before they can behold that Verity and Truth which is seen and beheld with a pure and clean mind. For thou knowest, O *Honoratus*, that we put our selves into the company of such men for no other cause, but for that they said, that, the terror of authority being set aside, they would with plain and admirable reasons bring their hearers and followers unto God, and free them from

from all errour. For what else was it that enforced me to follow them, and to hearken to them attentively, almost for the space of nine years, having despised and contemned the religion which by my parents was ingrafted in me, being a little child, but for that they affirmed that we are terrified with superstition, and commanded to believe, before any reason is given us of belief: and that they importune and urge none to believe, untill the truth be first discussed and made manifest unto them; who would not be allured with these promises? especially the mind of a young man desirous of truth, a babler, and one that was puffed up with pride upon disputations had with some skilfull and learned Schoolmen: and such an one they found me then to be, namely, who despised (*my former religion*) like old wives tales, and desired to embrace

and with greedinesse to receive the manifest and sincere Truth which they promised to teach and deliver. But again, what reason withdrew me and called me back that I did not wholly adhere unto them, but kept my self in the degree of Hearers, as they use to call them, and did not forgo the hopes and affairs which I had in this world; but for that I also noted and observed, that they were more eloquent and copious in confuting others, then firm and certain in proving and maintaining their own grounds? But what shall I say of my self, who was now become a Catholick Christian: who being almost exhausted and greedy after a very long thirst, was now with an ardent affection returned again to the breasts of the Church, which I shook and wrung, much weeping and lamenting, to the end I might not onely draw from thence suf-



sufficient comfort for my misery and affliction, but might also recover my former hope of life and salvation? What then shall I say of my self? And as for thee, thou didest so vehemently hate and detest them, that I could hardly draw thee by entreaties and exhortations to hearken unto them and try them: and when thou heardest them, with what other thing I pray thee wert thou taken and delighted ( for I beseech thee, call it to remembrance ) but with a certain great presumption and promise of reasons? But because for a long time they made many large and vehement discourses touching the errors of un-kilfull men (which every one that is but meanly learned can easily do) it was late before I came to the knowledge thereof. And if they delivered any thing unto us out of their own men, we thought there was a necessity to receive and embrace

brace it, when as other things upon which we might rely, occurred not : wherein they dealt with us as deccitfull Fowlers are wont to do , who prick down limetwigs by a waters side, to the end they may deceive the thirsty Birds : for they stop up, and by some means or other they cover the other waters that are thereabouts : or they drive the birds from thence with frights and fears, that not by their own free choise and election, but meerly for necessity and want of water they may fall into their snares. But why do I not return this answer to my self, that such neat and pretty similitudes as these , and such like reprehensions may be both most civilly and most snappishly objected by any enemy or adversary whatsoever, against all those that deliver any thing by teaching or instruction ? But yet for this cause I thought it necessary to  
insert

insert some such thing into these my writings, that I may warn and admonish them thereby to leave off all such manner of proceedings: to the end that (as a certain man said) the toys of common places being set aside, one thing may contend and strive with another, one cause with another, one reason with another: wherefore let them forbear to say, what they hold in a manner necessary to be spoken, when any one forsakes them that hath long been their hearer, The light is passed through him. For thou my greatest care (for I am not too solicitous for them) seekest how vain a thing this is, and how easie a matter it is for any one to blame and reprehend it; this therefore I leave to thy wisdom to be discussed. For I am not afraid lest thou shouldest think that I was deprived of light, when I was entangled with a worldly life, and had a

remote and obscure hope of a beautifull wife, of the pomp of riches, of the vanity of honours, and of other hurtfull and pernicious pleasures: for I ceased not to desire and hope for all these things (as thou knowest right well) when I was their follower and heard them attentively: nor do I attribute this to their doctrine, for I confesse they diligently warned and admonished me to beware of these things: but to say that I am now destitute of light, when as I have alienated and withdrawn my self from all these shadows and semblances of things, and have resolved to content my self with such food onely, as may seem necessary to the health of my body: and that I was enlightned and shining before, when I was addicted unto those things and was intangled with them, is the part of a man (to speak in the mildest manner) who lesse considerately ponders

ponders the things of which he much desires to talk and discourse. But if you please let us come to the matter.

## C H A P. II.

*That the Manichees do condemn  
the old Testament.*

**T**HOU art not ignorant how the Manichees reprehending the Catholick Faith, and especially rent- ing and tearing in pieces the old Testament, do move and disturb the unskilfull people: who truly know not how those things are to be understood, and how being taken they may profitably descend and be conveyed into the veins and marrow of tender souls. And because there occur certain things in those books which may give some offence to those that are ignorant and carelesse of themselves (as the greatest part of the common people is) they may be  
plau<sup>r</sup>

plausibly reprehended and blamed, but cannot be plausibly defended by many, by reason of the mysteries which are contained therein; and those few that can do it, affect not publick and open conflicts whereby to divulge their fame and renown, and for this cause they are not known at all but unto those onely, who with much care and diligence do seek and enquire after them: wherefore touching this rashnesse of the Manichees, in reprehending the Old Testament and the Catholick Faith, hear I beseech thee, the things which move and trouble me; the which I desire and hope that thou wilt receive with such an hearty mind and good will as by me they are delivered and spoken; for God, unto whom the secrets of my conscience lie open and are manifest, knows, that I deal not maliciously in this speech, but as I conceive, it ought to be understood  
in

in proof of the truth, unto which long since I have addicted my self, and that with an incredible care and sollicitude, lest I should erre and go astray with you, which I may easily do ; when as to hold the same course with you, and yet to embrace and keep the right way, it is a matter (not to speak too harshly) of extreame difficultie. But I presume that even in this hope which I have of your attaining together with me unto the way of wildome, he, unto whom I have consecrated my self, will not leave nor forsake me : when dayes and nights I endeavour to behold : and for that I perceive my self to be weak and infirm, by reason that the eye of my soul is for my sinnes, and the custome thereof wounded with the stripes of inveterate opinions, I beg it oftentimes with weeping and tears, and as it happeneth unto mens eyes, which after

ter the sufferance of a long blindness and darkness are hardly open: they have a great desire to see light, and yet by their twinkling and turning away, they refuse to behold it, especially if any one should endeavour to expose them to the light of the Sun: so it falls out with me at the present, for I acknowledge that there is a certain unspeakable and singular good of the soul, which may be seen and contemplated with the mind, but I confesse with tears in mine eyes and sighs from my heart that I am not yet fit nor able to behold it: wherefore the Divine goodness will not forsake me, if I faim nothing, if I speak according to my duty, if I love the truth, if I affect friendship, and if I take a great care that thou mayest not be deceived.



## CHAP. III.

*Of the four wayes of expounding  
the Old Testament.*

**T**Hose that earnestly desire to know the Old Testament, are to understand that it is taught and expounded after four manner of wayes: according to the History, according to the Etiologie, according to the Analogy, and according to the Allegory. Think me not foolish for using Greek names: First, for that I have so received, and I dare not deliver this otherwise unto thee then as I have received: Next thou also observe, that we have no usuall names for these things: and if I had framed any by-interpretation, I should be lesse apt to be understood: and if I should use any circumlocution, I should be lesse quick and lesse ready in discoursing: this  
one-

onely I intreat and beseech thee to believe, that howsoever I may erre, I do it not out of any arrogancy or pride. The Scripture is treated according to the history when it is declared therein what is written, or what is done: and what is not done but written onely as it were done. According to the Etiology, when it is shewed thereby for what cause any thing is either done or said. According to the Analogy, when it is demonstrated that the two Testaments, the Old and the New, are not contrary the one unto the other. According to the Allegory, when it is read therein that certain things that are written, ought not to be understood according to the letter, but according to the figure. All these manner of wayes of alledging Scripture, have been used by our Lord Iesus Christ and by the Apostles. He cited Scripture according to the  
Hi-

History, when, unto those that objected that his Disciples had plucked the ears of Corn upon the Sabbath day, he answered, *Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him : how he entred into the house of God and did eat the loaves of Proposition (or Shew-bread) which it was not lawfull for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but for Priests onely? Mat. 12. 1, 3, 4. 1 Sam. 21. 6. Exod. 29. 32.* He alledged Scripture according to the Etiology, when having forbidden the dismissing of wives for any cause but onely fornication, unto the Pharisees, who told him that *Moses* had given men leave to dismiss them, having first given them a bill of divorce, he said : *This Moses did for the hardnesse of your hearts. Deut. 24. 1. Mat. 19. 8.* for here a cause was rendred, why that was well permitted-

mitted by *Moses* for a time, to the end that this which Christ commanded might seem to shew and demonstrate other times, but to declare how the divine Providence hath with a certain wonderfull disposition ordered and composed the courses and order of these times, it is a long work. Now touching the Analogy, whereby appears the accord and consent of both the Testaments, what shall I say, but that all those have used it, unto whose authority the Manichees do give place, when as they may consider with themselves how many things they are wont to say are thrust into the divine Scripture by I know not what corrupters of the truth? which I alwayes thought to be an extream weak speech even when I heard and followed them: neither was this my opinion onely, but thine also (for I well remember it) and it was the opinion of us all  
who

who endeavoured to be somewhat more carefull and wary in judging, then was the common people and multitude of believers. And whereas they have expounded and declared unto me many things that did much move and trouble me (namely thole wherein they boasted and bragged oftentimes, and that more abundantly because more securely, as not having any adversary to resist and oppose them. I think they have spoken nothing more impudently or (to speak more mildly) with lesse circumsp̄ction and more weaknesse, then that the divine Scriptures are falsified and corrupted: when as it ought but lately to have been done, and yet they cannot convince it to be so, by any copies that are now extant: for if they did say, that they did not think that they ought to receive those Scriptures at all, because they are written by such Authours

as

as they did not conceive to have written the truth, their pretence of rejecting them would in some sort be more hidden, and their error more humane and pardonable: for upon this ground they have rejected the book which is called the *Acts of the Apostles*: at which their proceedings, when I well weigh it and consider it with my self, I cannot sufficiently wonder and admire; for they wanted not onely humane wildome herein, but even a reasonable and an indifferent judgement: for that book hath so many things, which are like unto those which they do receive, that it seems to me to be a great folly not to receive this also, and if any thing displeaseth them therein, presently to say it is false, and put in: now if they judge such a speech to be impudent (as indeed it is) why should they conceive those things to deserve any credit and esteem in *S. Paul's Epistles*

stles, and the four books of the Gospel, wherein I know not whether or no, proportionably speaking, there be many more things then there could be in that book, which they would have men believe, to have been thrust in by falsifiers and corrupters? But this indeed is my opinion, which I request thee to weigh and consider with me, with a very clear and peaceable judgement: for thou art not ignorant how the Manichees endeavouring to bring in the the person of their authour *Manichæus* into the number of the Apostles, do say that by him we have received the Holy Ghost, whom our Lord promised to send to his Disciples: if therefore they should receive those *Acts of the Apostles* wherein the comming of the Holy Ghost is evidently declared and set down. *Act. 2.2.* they could find no ground to say why that was inserted and put  
in

in: for they pretend I know not what corrupters of the divine books to have been before *Manichens* his time: and that they were corrupted by those that desired to confound the law of the Jews with the Gospel of Christ; but this they cannot say of the Holy Ghost, unlesse peradventure they will affirm that the corrupters could foretell things that were to come, and thereupon did put into their books that which might be produced against one *Manichens* who sometimes was to come, and who should say and averre that he had sent the Holy Ghost; but of the Holy Ghost we intend to speak more plainly hereafter; but now let us return to our former matter; for I think that I have sufficiently demonstrated and shewn, that the historicall sense is to be found in the Old Testament, and the Etiologicall and Analogicall in the New:  
it



it remains that I shew also the Allegoricall therein. Our Redeemer himself alledgeth in the Gospel an Allegory out of the Old Testament, saying: *This generation seeketh after a sign, and none shall be given unto it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three dayes and three nights in the Whales belly: so shall the Sonne of man be three dayes and three nights in the heart of the earth.* Mat. 12. 39 40. Jonas 1. 17. And what shall I say of the Apostle Paul, who also in his 1 Ep. to the Corinthians c. 10, to the 12. v. signifies, that the history it self of Exodus was an Allegory of the Christian people that was to come? Moreover Brethren, I would not (saith he) that ye should be ignorant how that all our Fathers were under the cloud, Exod. 13. 21. Num. 14. 14. Deut. 1. 33. Psal. 78. 14. and all passed through the sea: Exod.

14. 22.

14. 22. Josh. 4. 23. Psal. 78. 13. and were all Baptized unto Moles in the cloud and in the sea: and did all eat the same spirituall meat, and did all drink the same spirituall drink: (for they drank of the spirituall Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ) but with many of them God was not well pleased: Num. 24. 28. and 26. 65. for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our figures (or examples) to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Psalm. 106. 14. Neither let us worship Idols, as some of them did, as it is written, Exod. 32. 6. The people sate down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them did, and there fell in one day three and twenty thousand men, Num. 25. 9. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them tempted

tempted him, and were destroyed by serpents. Numb. 21. 6. Neither let us murmur, as some of them murmured, and they perished by the destroyer. Numb. 14. 37. And all these things happened to them in a figure (or for an example) but they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come. The same Apostle useth also a certain Allegory, which is much to our purpose, because the Manichees are wont to alledge it in their disputations, and boast of it, when writing to the Galathians he saith, Gal. 4. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26. For it is written that Abraham had two sonnes, the one by a bond-maid, Gen. 16. 15. the other by a free-woman, Gen. 21. 2. but he that was by the bond-maid was born according to the flesh; but he that was by the free-woman was born according to promise: which things are said by an Allegory: for  
C these

these are the two Testaments, the one from the mount Sina which gendreth to bondage, which is Agar (for Sina is a mountain in Arabia adjoyning to Hierusalem that now is) and is in bondage with her children: But Hierusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. Here therefore those too too wicked men whilest they endeavour to frustrate the Law, do enforce us to allow and approve of those Scriptures: for they diligently observe that it is said, that they are in bondage that are under the Law, and they often alledge that last above the rest, Galath. 5. 4. *Christ is become of no effect unto you that are justified by the Law, ye are false from Grace.* We grant all these things to be true, neither do we say, that that Law is necessary, but onely for those unto whom bondage is yet profitable and expedient; and therefore that it was fitly

fitly and commodiously ordained  
 that such men as could not be re-  
 claimed and withdrawn from sinning  
 by reason, ought to be constrained by  
 the Law, namely by the threats and  
 terrors of those <sup>high</sup> ~~Paul~~  
 even fools themselves can perceive  
 and apprehend : from which when  
 the grace of Christ doth free us, it  
 doth not condemn that Law, but it  
 invites us for the time to come to o-  
 bey his charity, and not to serve and  
 be subject to the terrour of the Law.  
 For that is a Grace, that is to say,  
 a Benefit, which they that yet desire  
 to be under the bonds of the Law,  
 do not understand that the Divine  
 Majesty hath imparted unto them;  
 whom *Paul* the Apostle doth de-  
 servedly reprove, as though they  
 were Infidels, because they did not  
 believe that they are now freed by  
 our Lord Jesus Christ, from that  
 servitude and bondage wherunto  
 C 2 they

they were subject for a certain time by Gods most just order and disposing. Hereupon it is that the same Apostle saith. Gal. 3. 24. *The law was our Pedagogue* (therefore gave unto men a Pedagogue whom they should fear, who gave them afterwards a master whom they should love : and yet neverthelesse in those precepts and Commandments of the Law, (which it is not lawfull for Christians now to use, such as are either the Sabbath or Circumcision, or the Sacrifices, and whatsoever is of that sort) so great mysteries are contained and comprehended, that every godly man may understand that there is nothing more pernicious and hurtfull, then that whatsoever is comprised therein should be understood according to the letter, that is, to the native sense of the words : and nothing more wholesome and profitable,

fitable, then to have it expounded according to the spirit or spirituall sense and understanding : hence it is that *the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth or giveth life.* 2 Cor. 3. 6. hence it is, that *in the reading of the Old Testament, the self same veil remaineth untaken away, because in Christ it is made void :* vers. 14. for not the Old Testament, but the veile thereof is made void in Christ, to the end that may be understood and made manifest by him, which without him is hidden and obscure : and therefore the same Apostle immediately after saith : *But when thou shalt turn to Christ the veil shall be taken away,* vers. 16. but he doth not say that the Law or the Old Testament shall be taken away : they are not therefore taken away by our Lords grace, as though unprofitable things lay hidden and were covered there, but rather the

veil or cover is taken away, where-  
with wholesome and profitable  
things were covered and kept close.  
This is the benefit which they reap  
and receive, who with a studious and  
a devout mind and not with a trou-  
bled and wicked spirit, do seek after  
the sense of those Scriptures: and  
both the order of things, and the  
causes of what is said and done, and  
so great an accord of the Old Testa-  
ment with the New, even to the last  
tittle, and so great mysteries and se-  
crets of figures are clearly and plain-  
ly demonstrated and shewn: that all  
the things that are found out by in-  
terpreting them, may enforce men to  
confesse and grant that they are mi-  
serable and wretched, that will con-  
demn these things, before they have  
attained to the knowledge of them.

Touching those words of the A-  
postle: *The letter killeth, but the  
spirit quickneth*, as they are here ex-  
pounded



pounded by S. *Augustine*, he passeth this judgement, that he did more conveniently in his opinion expound them in his book *De Spiritu & Litera*, though this sentle is not to be rejected. *Lib. 1. Retract. c. 14.*

CHAP. IV.

*Of three wayes whereby men fall into error.*

**T**Hat for the present the depth and profoundeste of knowledge and science being set aside, I may so treat with thee, as I think I ought to treat with my familiar friend, that is, as well as I can, but not so well as I have admired to see very learned men been able to do: there be three kinds of error into which men may fall when they reade any thing; I will speak of every one of them. The first kind is, when

C 4.

that

that is thought to be true which indeed is false, and was thought to be so by the Authour that wrote it. The second kind not being of so large an extent, yet no lesse damageable and hurtfull then the former, is, when that which is false, is thought to be true, and was thought to be so by the Authour that wrote it. The third kind, is, when some truth is learned out of another mans writing, which the Authour himself that wrote it, understood not : in which kind there is no small profit, yea if thou dost consider it attentively thou shalt find that the Reader gains unto himself the whole profit of the reading. An example of the first kind is this : If any one should say and believe that *Rhadamanthus* hearth and judgeth in hell the causes of the dead, because he read it in *Virgils* verses ; for this man erres two manner of wayes : first, for that he be-

believeth that which he ought not to believe; and secondly, for that the Authour which he read, is not thought to have believed it. An example of the second kind may be this: because *Lucretius* writes, that the soul is made of atomes, and that after death it is dissolved into the same atomes and perisheth, if any one should think that this is true, and that he ought to believe it: for this man is not lesse unhappy for perswading himself certainly in so great a matter that to be true, which indeed is false, for that *Lucretius*, by whose books he was deceived, was of that opinion; for what doth it avail him to be certain of the Authours opinion, when as he hath made choise of such an authour, not by whom, but with whom he might erre and be deceived? An example of the third kind is this: if any one having read some place in *Epicurus*

his works wherein he praiseth continency should affirm, That he placed the chiefeft good and felicity in Virtue ; and that therefore he ought not to be blamed nor reprehended ; now though *Epicurus* believes that the chiefeft happinesse of man consists in corporall pleasures, yet what prejudice doth this man receive and sustain by his error, when as he holds not so filthy and hurtfull an opinion, nor for any other cause is he pleased with *Epicurus*, but for that he conceives him not to have held so bad an opinion as ought not indeed to have been held and maintained ? this error, is not onely humane and pardonable, but also oftentimes most worthy of a man : for what if a man should make me this relation touching one of my loving friends, that my friend when he was come to mans estate, told him in the hearing of many, that his infancy

fancy and childhood had been so pleasing and delightfull unto him, that even he swore he would lead such a life afterwards : and that I had received such certain proofs of the truth of this matter, that I could not without shame and impudency deny it: should I seem worthy of blame and reproof, if I should think that when he said this, he meant and intended to signifie thereby, that he took much delight in an innocent life, and a mind alienated from those appetites and desires wherewith mankind is wont to be involved, and thereupon my love and affection towards him should be much increased, although perhaps the young man having been foolish in his tender age, had greatly affected a certain liberty in playing and eating and sluggish rest? for suppose he had died after I had received this relation touching him, and

and no body could be found that could tell me what his judgement and opinion was herein : would any one be so mischievous and wicked, as to fall out and be angry with me for praising his resolution and intention according to the intelligence which had been delivered and imparted unto me ? Yea what if a just valuer and esteemer of things should perhaps make no difficulty to praise and commend my good will and opinion, for that I was taken and delighted with innocency, and being a man would rather frame a good conceit of another man in a doubtful matter, even when he spake o'herwise then he ought to have done ?

## C H A P. V,

*Of the truth of the Holy Scripture.*

**N**Ow thou hast heard the three kinds of errour into which men may fall that reade any thing : hear also so many conditions and differences of the same Scriptures, for it is necessary that so many do occur; for either some one hath written a profitable work, and another doth not rightly and profitably understand it : or the writer and the reader have both bestowed their labours unprofitably ; or the reader doth well and rightly understand, but the Authours work is uselesse and unprofitable. Of these three kinds the first I disallow not, the last I esteem not: for whether can I blame an Authour whose work is not well and rightly understood, if he be no way guilty of that fault, nor can I be troubled

troubled to see an Authour read that hath not known the truth, when I see that his readers do receive no hurt nor prejudice thereby : wherefore, there is one kind that is most approved, and is most purged and cleaned from error, which is, when not onely good works are set forth, but are also well and rightly understood by their readers ; yet notwithstanding that also is divided into two kinds, and it is not wholly free from error : for it happeneth oftentimes that the writer hath a good meaning, and the reader hath so too, but another then he, and oftentimes a better conceit, oftentimes a lower, and yet one that is commodious and profitable : but when as we attain to the true sense and meaning of the Authour which we reade; and the work much conduceth to the leading of a good life, the truth appears abundantly therein, and there is no



gap nor passage that lies open to falshood and deceit. This kind is very seldome to be found, when the discourse is about things that are extremely hard and obscure ; neither in my opinion can it be clearly and manifestly known; but onely be believed: for by what proofs or arguments can I so perfectly gather what the will of a man is, that is absent or dead, that I can swear and take my oath what it is : when as if he were asked even being present there might be many things which he might most officiously conceal and hide, although he were not a wicked man? but to know the quality of the Author I think it nothing avails to the knowledge of the matter : yet nevertheless he highly deserves to be reputed and esteemed to be a good man, who by his books and writings affords great assistance unto mankind and to posterity. Now I would  
have

have the Manichees to tell me in which kind they place the errour (which they conceive) of the Catholick Church. If in the first it is a grievous fault indeed, but we need not seek farre to know how to defend it ; for it is sufficient to deny that we understand it, as they conceive, when they inveigh against it. If in the second, it is no lesse 'grievous, but the same words will serve to confute it. If in the third, it is no fault at all. Go to then, and hereafter consider the Scriptures themselves : for what do they object against the books which are called the Old Testament? do they say that they are good, but that we do not well and rightly understand them? but they themselves receive them not. Do they say that they are neither good, nor rightly understood by us? but this is sufficiently convinced by the former defence ; or will they say, that we right-  
ly

ly understand them, but that the books be naught? what is this, but to acquit and absolve their living adversaries, with whom they are in debate, and to accuse those that are formerly dead, with whom they have no contention nor strife? Verily *I* do believe that all the works which those men left to posterity, were profitably written, and that they were great and very holy men, and that that Law was made and published by Gods will and command: and although my skill and knowledge be but very little in books of that kind, yet this *I* can easily prove to be true unto one that bears an equall and an impartiall, and not an obstinate and a refractory mind; and *I* will do it, when thou wilt afford me an attentive and a courteous hearing, and mine own occasions will permit. But now is it not sufficient for me, howsoever that businesse goes,  
not

not to have been beguiled nor deceived.

# CHAP. VI.

*That the holy Scripture is first to be loved before it can be learned.*

**O** *Honoratus*, I call mine own conscience and God, who inhabits pure souls, to witnesse, that I judge and esteem nothing to be more wise, nothing more chaste, nothing more religious then all those Scriptures be, which under the name of the Old Testament, are held and embraced by the Catholick Church. I know thou admirest to hear me talk thus, for I cannot disguise nor dissemble the matter, we have been exhorted and perswaded to believe far otherwise: but truly, a rasher act cannot be committed (rashnesse being a fault unto which we were addicted

dicted being yet but children ) then to forsake the judgement of the Expositours of any kind of books who professe that they can receive them, and can teach and deliver them to their disciples : and to require their judgement and opinion of them, who being constrained, I know not for what cause have denounced a most sharp and bitter warre against their authours and compilers? and that I may speak of those sciences wherein perhaps a Reader may erre without any heinous crime or offence, who ever thought that the exposition of the profound and obscure books of *Aristotle* ought to be received from his enemy? or who being desirous to learn the Geometry of *Archimedes*, would take *Epicurus* to be his master, against which he disputed very stiffely and eagerly, and yet (as I conceive) he understood nothing thereof? Are those

those Scriptures of the law most plain and easie against which they proceed with violence in vain and to no purpose, as though they were exposed and lay open to the capacity of the common people? I think these men are like to that woman which they themselves do laugh at and deride, who being angry to hear the praises of the sunne and to have it recommended unto her by a certain Manichean woman to be worshipped, as she was religiously simple, starts up upon a sudden, and stamping often upon the place, which the sunne with his beams had enlightned thorough a window, began to cry out, Behold I contemn and tread under foot the sunne and thy God. That this was done altogether foolishly, and like unto a woman, no man can deny: but do not those men seem to resemble her, who casting forth violent speeches and curses against the things

things they understand not, neither why they were written, nor what manner of things they be (which seem as though they were low and contemptible, but to them that understand them they are subtile and divine) think to receive some benefit thereby, because unskilfull men do countenance and applaud them? believe me whatsoever is contained in those Scriptures is high and divine : there is truth altogether in them, and most fit instruction both for the amending and reforming mens minds : and it is certainly so well digested and ordered, that every one may receive from thence that which is sufficient for himself, if he comes prepared to take it with such piety and devotion, as true Religion doth require. Should I go about to prove this unto thee I must alledge many reasons, and entertain thee with a longer discourse : for  
first

first I must perswade thee not to hate the Authours themselves, and then to love them : and this I must effect by ~~any other means~~, rather then by expounding their opinions and their writings : and therefore if we did hate *Virgil*, yea if we did not love him upon the commendation of our Predecessours before we understood him, we should never be satisfied in those innumerable questions touching him wherewith Grammarians are wont to be much perplexed and troubled : nor should we give eare to any man that could resolve those questions to his honour and praise, but we should give countenance and shew favour unto him who by those questions would endeavour to shew that he erred and doted; but now when as many men do labour to expound them, and that after divers manners, and every one according to his skill and ability



lity, they receive the chiefeſt commendation and applauſe, by whoſe expoſitions he is found to be a better Poet, and he is conceived and believed even by thoſe that underſtand him not, not onely to have committed no fault nor errour, but to have ſaid nothing which doth not deſerve much glory and praiſe: and therefore if a Maſter fails but in a ſmall queſtion, and knows not what to anſwer, we are rather angry and offended with him, then we will conceive that by any fault committed by *Maro* he is ſilent and dumb: but if a Maſter ſhould in his own defence, affirm that ſo great an Author hath committed a fault, he would looſe ſo much credit and reputation thereby, that his ſcholars would hardly continue with him even though he ſhould hyre them with wages and rewards. How great a matter were it for us to give  
ſo

so much credit to those Writers by whose mouthes the Holy Ghost hath spoken as Antiquity confirmed by a long continuance doth testifie and declare? but we forsooth being very wise young men, and wonderfull searchers of reasons, not having so much as perused those books, nor sought out Masters to expound them unto us, nor somewhat accused our own slownesse herein, nor held them to have any judgement or understanding who affirmed that those works had for a long time been read, kept and expounded thorough the whole world, though that no credit was to be given unto them, being moved by their words, who were their enemies and offended with them, by whom we were enforced with a false promise of reason to believe and embrace unheard of millions of fables and tales.

CHAP. VII.

*That we ought not to judge rashly of the holy Scriptures: and how and with what care and diligence the true Religion is to be sought for.*

**B**Ut now if I can, I will accomplish that which I have begun, and I will treat with thee after such a sort, that in the meantime I will not expound the Catholick Faith, but I will shew unto them that have a care of their souls some hope of divine fruit, and of finding out the Truth, to the end they may search out the great mysteries and secrets of Faith. He that seeks after the true Religion, doth without doubt either believe already that the Soul is immortall, unto whom

D

that

that Religion may be commodious and profitable, or he desires to find her to be so in the same Religion; and therefore all Religion is for the souls sake: for the nature of the body howsoever it doth put him to no care and solicitude, especially after death, whose soul hath taken a course by which it may become blessed. Wherefore true Religion if there be any, was either onely one chiefly instituted for the souls sake: and this soul erres and is foolish, as we see, untill she gets and possesses wildome, and that perhaps is the true Religion, if I seek out and enquire the cause of her erring, I find it to be a thing which is extremely hidden and obscure. But do I send thee to fables? or do *I* enforce thee to believe any thing rashly? *I* say our soul being entangled and drowned in error and folly, seeks after the way of verity and truth, if there be any such to be

be found, if thou findest not thy self thus inclined and disposed, pardon me, and make me *I* pray thee, partaker of thy wisdom: but if thou doest, let us, *I* beseech thee, both together seek out the truth. Imagine with thy self that no notice had as yet been given unto us, nor no insinuation made unto us of any Religion whatsoever. Behold we undertake a new work, and a new businesse. Professours of Religion are *I* believe to be sought for, if there be no such thing. Suppose then that we have found men of divers opinions, and in that diversity seeking to draw every one unto them; but that in the mean time, some amongst these do surpass the rest in renown of fame, and in the possession of almost all people. Whether they embrace the truth or no it is a great question; but are they not first to be examined and tried, that so long as we erre (for as

men we are subject to errour ) we may seem to erre with mankind it self? but thou wilt say, Truth is to be found but amongst a few certain men: if thou knowest amongst whom it is, why then thou knowest already what it is. Did not *I* say a little before that we would seek after the truth, as though we were yet ignorant thereof? but if by the force of truth thou doest conjecture that there be but few that embrace it, and yet thou knowest not who they be, what if those few do lead and rule the multitude by their authority, and can dive into the secrets and mysteries of faith, and can make them in a manner plain and manifest? do we not see how few attain to the height of eloquence, and yet the schools of Rhetoricians do make a great noise throughout the whole world, with companies of young men? Do all those that desire to become good

orateurs, being terrified with the multitude of unskilfull men, think that they ought to addict themselves rather to the studie of the orations of *Cacilius* and *Erucius*, then to those of *Tullius Cicero*? all men affect the things that are strengthened and confirmed by the authority of their ancestors. The simple sort of people endeavours to learn those things which a few learned men have delivered unto them to be learned: but very few there be that attain unto great eloquence, fewer there be that practise it, but fewest of all that grow eminent and are famous. What if true Religion be some such thing? what if a multitude of ignorant people frequents the Churches, it is no proof nor argument, that therefore none are made perfect by those mysteries? and yet if so few should studie eloquence, as there are few that become eloquent, our parents

would never think it fit to have us recommended unto such masters. When as therefore the multitude, which abounds with a number of unskilfull people, invites us to these studies, and makes us earnestly to affect that which few do obtain, why will we not admit that we have the like cause in Religion, the which peradventure we contemne and despise to the great perill and hazard of our souls? for if the most true and most sincere worship of God, though it be but amongst a few, yet it is amongst those with whom the multitude, though wholly addicted to their appetites and desires, and farre from the purity of knowledge and understanding, doth consent and agree, which without all doubt may come to passe: I ask, what answer are we able to give if any one should reprove our rashnes & folly for that having a great care to find out the  
true



true Religion; we do not diligently search it out amongst the masters and teachers thereof? if I should say the multitude hath discouraged me. Why then hath it not disheartened men from the study of the liberall sciences which hardly yields any profit to this present life? why not from seeking after money and getting wealth? why not from obtaining dignities and honours? moreover, why not from recovering and preserving health? finally, why not from the desire of a blessed & an happy life? in all which affairs though many men be employed, yet few there be that are eminent and excell. You will say that the books of the Old Testament seemed to contain absurd things. Who are they that affirm it? namely enemies, for what cause or reason they did it, is not now the question; but yet they were enemies, you will say when you read them you understood so much

by your own reading. Is it so indeed? if thou hadst no skill in Poetrie at all thou durst not take in hand *Terentianus Maurus* without a master; *Asper, Cornutus, Donatus*, and a multitude of other Authours are thought requisite for the understanding of any Poet, whose verses deserve no greater esteem then the approbation and applause of a stage: and thou without a guide doest undertake to reade thole books, and without a master darest passe thy judgement upon them, which, howsoever they be, are notwithstanding by the confession of almost all mankind, published to be holy and replenished with divine matters: nor if thou findest some things therein which seem unto thee absurd, dost thou rather accuse the dulnesse of thy wit, and thy mind corrupted with the infection of this world ( as the minds of all fools are ) then thole books

books which peradventure by such kind of men cannot be well conceived and understood. Thou shouldst do well to seek out a man both pious and learned, or one that is esteemed and reputed so to be, by the approbation and consent of many; by whose instructions thou mightest become better, and more expert and skilfull by his learning. Such an one (saist thou) was not easie to be found: it would be some labour and trouble to seek him. There was none such in the land wherein thou didst dwell. If so, what cause could more profitably enforce thee to travell? if he lay hid in the continent or firm land, or were not there at all; thou shouldst sail beyond sea: if he were not there to be found by the shore, thou shouldst make a voyage even unto those lands, wherein the things which are contained in those books are said and reported to have been

done. O *Honoratus* have we done any such thing? and yet when we were but most wretched and silly boyes we did at our own pleasure, and in our own judgement, condemn a Religion, and that perhaps a most holy one (for I speak, as yet, as though some doubt were to be made thereof) whole fame and renown hath already possessed the whole world. What if the things which seem in those Scriptures offensive to some that are ignorant and unskillfull, be for this cause so written and set down, that when such things are read as agree not with the sense of all sorts of men, but much lesse with theirs that are holy and wise, we may with more care and diligence seek out a secret and hidden meaning thereof? dost thou not see how men labour to interpret the pastorall *Caramite*, upon whom the rough shepherd poured out his affections: and  
how

how they affirm that the boy *Alex-*  
*is* ( upon whom *Plato* is also said to  
have made some love-verses ) signi-  
fies I know not what great and my-  
sterious matter, but that it surpasseth  
the judgement and understanding of  
unskillfull men : when as indeed that  
Poet abounding in his inventions  
may without any detestable crime or  
offence be conceived to have pub-  
lished lascivious songs ? but were we  
indeed hindred and withdrawn from  
seeking out the true Religion, either  
by the publishing of some law a-  
gainst it, or by the power of them  
that oppose it, or by the contempt-  
ible shew and appearance of men de-  
dicated to the service of God, or by  
any base or dishonest report ; or by  
the newnesse of the institution, or by  
some hidden profession thereof ? No,  
no, none of these things did with-  
draw and hinder us: all laws both  
divine and humane do permit men to  
seek

seek out the Catholick faith, and certainly it is lawfull according to humane law to hold & embrace it, if so long as we erre, we be uncertain of the divine law. We have no enemy that puts any fright or terrour into our weaknes: although truth and the salvation of our souls, if it be sought after, where it is lawful to seek it with most safety; and it cannot be found, ought to be enquired for with any danger and hazard whatsoever; the degrees of all powers & dignities do most devoutly impart their service unto this sacred and divine worship: and the very name of Religion is most honourable, and hath a very great esteem and renown. What hindereth us then at last to seek out carefully, and to examine with a pious and diligent search, whether here be that truth which though few do know and retain after the sincerest manner, yet the favour and good will of all nations doth conspire

therein? All this being so, imagine (as I said) that we now make our first enquiry what Religion we ought to embrace, both for the cleansing and reforming of our souls. Without doubt we must take our beginning from the Catholick Church, for there are now more Christians, then if the Jews were joyned with the worshippers of idols. And whereas of the same Christians there be divers heresies, and all would have themselves thought to be Catholicks, and do call others besides themselves hereticks; the Church is one, as all do grant, greater in multitude, if thou considerest the whole world, and (as those that know do affirm) more sincere in truth then all the rest; but as for truth it is another question. But that which is sufficient for those that seek it, is, that the Catholick Church is one upon which other heresies do impose divers names, when as  
every

every one of them is called by its proper name, which it dares not deny; whereby we may understand by the judgement of Arbitratours not hindered by any favour, unto whom the name Catholick which all seek after, ought to be attributed. But lest that any one should think that this thing ought to be debated with much babling or superfluous discourse, there is one Church indeed wherein even the humane Laws are after a sort Christian. Yet I will have no preoccupation of judgement to be drawn from hence, but I judge it to be a most fit beginning for the seeking out of the truth. For there is no fear least the true worship of God relying upon no proper force of its own, should seem to stand in need to be upheld and supported by them whom it ought to sustain and support: but certainly it were a perfect happinesse, if the Truth could  
there



there be found, where with most security it may be sought and retained: but if it cannot, it ought to be sought for in another place, what danger and perill soever be incurred.

## CHAP. VIII.

*Of the way to the instruction of piety, and of the wonderfull pains Saint Augustine took to find it out.*

**H**AVING thus resolved and determined these things, which in my opinion are so right and just, that I ought to prevail in that cause with thee, whosoever were against it: I will recount unto thee as well as I can, what course I took to find out the true Religion, when as I sought it with such a mind and resolution as I have now declared, that it ought to be sought for. When I  
was

was departed from thee beyond the Sea, now staggering and doubting what I ought to embrace and what to reject (which doubting daily increased in me from the time that I gave ear unto that man, whose coming unto us, was as thou knowest) promised as from heaven, for the resolving of all the difficulties wherewith we were troubled, and I knew him to be a man like other men, but onely that he was eloquent, I held a great debate and deliberation with my self being now in Italy, not whether I should continue in that sect into which I was sorry and grieved that I had fallen, but by what means I might find out the truth, for the love whercof thou canst bear me witness, how I sighed and groaned. I was often of an opinion that it could not be found out, and the great waves of my thoughts and cogitations moved me to assent.

to

to the Academicks. Oftentimes again when I considered as well as I could, that the mind of man is endued with such vivacity and naturall strength, with such wildome and sharpnesse of wit, and with such quicknesse of judgement and understanding, I did not think that Truth could lye hidden and be concealed, but onely that the manner of Seeking it was hidden and unknown, and that that manner was to be received from some Divine Authority, it remained that I should enquire what that Authority was, when as in so great Dissensions and diversity of Opinions every one did promise that he would Teach and deliver it. Whereupon there occurred unto me an intricate Wood or Labyrinth into which it was very tedious and irksome to enter; and my mind remaining restless

lesse amongst these things, was tossed to and fro with a great desire of finding out the truth: yet nevertheless by little and little I brake off from their company more and more whom I had already purposed to forsake, and there was nothing now remaining in so great perils and dangers, but that with tears and pittifull words, I should beseech the Divine Providence to assist and help me; and this I did deliver gently and carefully, and now I was almost shaken by some disputations had with the Bishop of Millan *S. Ambrose, l. 5. conf. c. 14.* so that not without some hope I desired to enquire many things touching the Old Testament, which (as thou knowest) being discommended and dispraised unto us we abhorred and detested. And I had resolved to remain so long a Catechumen in the Church unto which I was delivered by

by my parents, untill I could find out that which I desired, or could perswade my self that it ought not to be sought for. Wherefore if there had been any one then, that could have taught me, he might have found me a most apt Schollar and very docible. *After this manner and with the like care and anxiety of thy soul thou seest that thou hast been long troubled and afflicted, and if thou seemest to thy self to have been already sufficiently tossed, and wouldest make an end of these labours and pains: Follow the way of the Catholick Discipline, which hath proceeded from Christ himself by his Apostles even unto us, and from hence shall descend and be conveyed to posterity.*

## C H A P. IX.

*Of Credulity.*

**T**Hou sayest my advice is foolish and ridiculous, seeing that all men do make it their profession to embrace and deliver Catholick doctrine. That all Hereticks do profess this I cannot deny, but after such a manner, that unto those which they entice and allure unto them, they promise to give a reason for the most hidden and most obscure things: and chiefly for this cause they blame and reprehend the Catholick Church, because those that approach and come unto her are commanded to believe: but they glory and boast that they impose not upon their followers the yoke of Faith and Believing, but open unto them the fountain it self of teaching and instruction. What (sayst thou) could be uttered or spoken

ken more redounding to their praise and commendation ? It is not so. This they promise having no power nor ability to perform it, but that by the name and pretence of reason they may winne and allure much company unto them ; for the soul of man naturally rejoyceth at the promise of reason, and not having regard to her own forces and weaknesse, by a desire she hath to eat the meats of those that are in health ( which are not prudently given to the infirm ) she hastily falls upon the poyson of the deceivers. But as for true Religion it can by no means be well and rightly received without some weighty command and force of authority, unlesse those things be first believed, which every one may afterwards attain unto, and learn if he carries himself well, and be thought worthy of it. Perhaps thou requirest some reason hereof, whereby thou mayst

mayst be induced and perswaded to believe that thou oughtest not sooner to be taught by reason, then by Faith and Belief. Which I can easily give unto thee, if thou wilt accept and receive it from me with an equall and impartiall mind. But that it may commodiously be done, I would have thee as it were answer to such questions as I shall propose unto thee. And first of all I would have thee to tell me: why dost thou conceive that we ought not to Believe? Because (sayst thou) credulity it self, from whence men are called credulous, seems unto me to be a certain vice, else it would not be a custome to object this name by way of reproch. For if a suspitious man be culpable and faulty, because he suspects things not certainly known: much more doth a credulous man deserve to be blamed, who differs herein from a suspitious  
man



man, that he that is suspitious maketh some doubt in unknown things, but he that is credulous makes none at all. In the mean time I admit of this opinion and this distinction; but thou knowest also that we do not say a man is curious but by way of taunt and reproch, but when we call a man studious, we speak it in his praise and commendation: wherefore if you please, mark what difference you conceive to be between these two. Thou answerest, that although both be moved with a great desire of knowing, yet in this they differ, that the curious man enquires after the things that belong not unto him, but the studious on the contrary after his own affairs. But we grant that a wife and children and their welfare do belong unto a man, and therefore if any one being gone a farre off out of his native soile should make a diligent enquiry  
of

of those that come from his parts, how his wife and children do, he hath certainly a great desire to know it, and yet we call not this a studious man, although he be desirous to know, and even those things which do chiefly belong and appertain unto him. Wherefore now thou understandest that that definition of a studious man is herein defective and imperfect: that every studious man desires to know the things that belong unto him, but that every man that hath such a desire ought not to be called a studious man; but he who exceedingly seeks after the things which belong to excellent breeding, and to the adorning of the mind, we rightly call (in Latine) a Student, that is, a desirous man, especially if we adde what he desires to hear. For we call one also studious of his friends, that loves his friends onely: yet nevertheless we think

think him not worthy of the common name of studious men without any addition. But one that desires to know how his friends do, I would not call him studious or desirous of hearing, unlesse having a good fame and credit he should often desire to hear the same thing, but if he should but once desire to hear it, I would call him a Student or desiring man. Now reflect upon a curious man, and tell me whether if any one should willingly hear a short tale not conducing at all unto his profit, that is, of things not belonging unto him, and this not with great eagerness and often, but very seldome and very modestly, either in some banquet, or in some meeting or assembly, wouldest thou think him to be a curious man? I conceive not, but truly he that hath a care of that thing which he would willingly hear might seem indeed to be so. Where-

E

fore

fore the definition also of a curious man ought to be corrected by the same Rule as is that of a studious man. And therefore consider also, whither the things formerly spoken ought to be amended. For why is he not unworthy of the name of a suspicious man, who sometimes suspecteth something, and he of a credulous man that sometimes believeth something? Wherefore as there is a very great difference between one that is desirous of any thing, and one that is altogether studious, and again between one that hath a care of a thing, and one that is curious: so is there between a believing man and a credulous man.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

*Why credulity is the way to Religion.*

**B**UT thou wilt say, Now see whether we ought to believe in Religion. For neither if we grant it to be one thing to believe, another to be credulous, doth it follow, that it is no fault to believe in matters of Religion: for what if it be a fault both to believe and to be credulous, as it is both to be drunk and to be a drunkard? whosoever thinks this to be certainly true, can in my opinion have no friend at all. For if it be a thing unreasonable to believe any thing, either he commits a foul fault that gives credit to his friend; or if he believes him not, I see not how he can call himself a friend, or the other. Here peradventure thou wilt say, I grant that something ought sometimes to be believed: now declare

how in Religion it is not a thing unreasonable to believe any thing before we know it, or understand it. I will if I can. Wherefore I ask thee, which doest thou conceive to be the greater fault, to instruct an unworthy person in Religion, or to believe that which is said by the instructours and teachers thereof? if thou understandest not whom I call an unworthy person: such an one I mean as comes to receive and embrace Religion with a feigned and dissembling heart. Thou grantest, as I conceive, that it is a thing more worthy of blame to expound to such an one the holy mysteries of faith, then to give credit to religious men, affirming something of Religion it self. Neither would it become thee to give another answer. Wherefore now imagine with thy self, that the man were present who is to instruct thee in point of Religion: how wilt thou make

make him believe that thou comest with a true and an unfeigned mind, and that thou usest no deceit nor dissimulation in this businesse? thou wilt say that upon thy good conscience thou feignest nothing, assuring it with all the words thou canst use, but yet with words. For being a man thou canst not so open the corners and secrets of thy mind to another man, that he may know thee inwardly. And if he shall say: Behold I do believe thee: but is it not more fit that thou also shouldst give credit unto me, seeing that if I hold and embrace any truth, thou art to receive the benefit thereof, and I to impart it? What answer shall we give, but that he ought to be believed? but saist thou, Had it not been better to alledge reason unto me, that I might follow it without any rashnesse whithersoever it should lead me? Perhaps it had been: but seeing that it

is so great a matter for thee to know God by reason, dost thou think that all men are capable of understanding the reasons whereby the mind of man is led to the knowledge of divine things, or the greater part of them: or but a few? I think, thou sayst, but a few. Dost thou believe that thou art in that number? Thou saist, It is not my part to answer to that question. Thou thinkest then that it is his part also to believe thee in this matter: which he doth indeed. Onely let me put thee in mind, that he hath already twice given credit unto thee, speaking uncertain things: and that thou wouldest not so much as once believe him, when he religiously warned and admonished thee. But suppose this to be so, and that thou comest with a sincere mind to embrace Religion, and that being one of those few men, thou canst understand the reasons by  
which



which the divine power is certainly known, dost thou think that Religion is to be denied to other men, that have not so great wits and judgments as thou hast? or dost thou conceive that by little and little they ought to be led by certain degrees to those chiefest secrets? thou plainly seest what course of proceeding is the more religious. For thou canst not think that any man ought by any means to be forsaken or rejected in the desire and affection of so great a matter. But art not thou of opinion, that unlesse a man first believes, that he shall attain unto that which he intended, and bears an humble and a suppliant mind, and being obedient to certain great and necessary precepts, be very well purged and made clean by a certain course of life, he cannot otherwise obtain those things that are purely true? indeed thou thinkest so. If then they, who by

certain reason can most easily conceive the divine mysteries, (one of which sort I believe thee to be) should proceed in this way, wherein those walk that first do believe, would they receive any hurt thereby? I think not. But yet thou saist, what necessity is there of delay? because, although by their proceedings they shall not prejudice themselves at all, yet they will endamage others by their example. For there is hardly any one, that hath so high a conceit of himself as he can have; and he that thinks too humbly of himself, ought to be raised up, and he that thinks too high, ought to be repressed, that neither the one may be overcome by despair, nor the other cast down headlong by boldnesse and presumption. Which is easily brought to passe, if even those that are able to flie, should a little be enforced to go, lest any should be dangerously

gerously invited thereunto, and thereby also a sufficient care may be had of others. This is the Providence of true Religion: this God himself hath appointed and commanded: this hath been delivered by our Predecessours of happy memory, this hath been observed even untill our dayes; to go about to overthrow this order, is nothing else but to seek out a sacrilegious way to true Religion. Which whosoever do, cannot attain unto that which they intend; though that be granted them which they desire. For *howsoever they surpasse and excell in wit, unlesse the divine Majesty doth aid and assist them, they creep upon the ground.* Which assistance he then affords when they that tend and walk towards him, have a care to proceed according to the course of humane society. Then which degree and step towards heaven nothing can be found more

more firm and stable. Verily, such is the force and efficacy of this reason, that I cannot resist it, for how can I say, that nothing ought to be believed unlessse it be known? besides all friendship is taken away unlessse something may be believed which cannot be demonstrated and proved by certain reason: and oftentimes without offence credit may be given to such stewards as are servants to Lords. But in matters of Religion what can be done that is more unreasonable and unjust, then that Gods Prelates should believe us, when we promise that we come to embrace Religion with an unfeigned mind; and we refuse to give credit unto them, when they teach and instruct us? Finally, what way can be more wholesome and profitable, then by believing those things which God hath appointed as preparatives for the cultivating and adoring the mind to be  
first

first disposed, and made fit to understand and receive the truth? or if thou beest already sufficiently disposed thereunto, rather to go a little about, where thou maist walk with the greatest safety, then both to be the Authour of danger to thy self, and an example of temerity, and rashnesse unto others.

## C H A P. XI.

*Of Understanding, Belief and Opinion.*

**V**VE have shewed already how without offence we may follow those that command us to believe: it remains that we consider for what cause they are not to be followed that promise to conduct and lead us by reason. Some are of opinion that they can hearken and give eare to these promisers of reason, not onely without any blame or dispraise,

dispraise, but also with some commendation and praise; but it is not so, for there be two sorts of persons that deserve praise in point of Religion: the one which hath already found out the true Religion, which we ought to judge most happy and blessed: the other which with the greatest care, and after the rightest manner, doth seek after it: the first sort is now in possession of it, the second is in the way, by which notwithstanding most certainly they will arrive at it. There be three other kinds of men which are indeed to be misliked and detested. The first is, of those that are opinative, that is, who think they know that which they know not. The second is, of those who truly do perceive their own ignorance, but do not so seek that they may find. The third is of those that neither think they know, nor have any will or desire to seek.

seek. There are also three things in the minds of men, near as it were the one unto the other, most worthy to be distinguished, to understand, to believe, and to think. Of which, if they be considered by themselves, the first is alwaies without offence, the second sometimes faultie, the third never without a fault; and this we ought to reserve to the same beatitude and felicity. For in this life how much soever a man knows, his knowledge doth not as yet make him most blessed, for that there be incomparably more things whereof he is ignorant. For to understand great and worthy, and divine things it is a most blessed thing. But it is not hurtfull to understand superfluous things, but perhaps it was prejudicial to learn them, when as they took up the time of necessary things. Also it is not a miserable thing to understand hurtfull things, but to do or suffer them.

For

For if any one understands how his enemy may be slain without endangering himself, he becomes not guilty by understanding it, if he desires it not: yea if he be free from such a desire, who is more innocent and guiltlesse then he? In believing a man is then to blame, when either he believes some unworthy thing of God, or gives too facile and easie credit unto the things reported of man. But in other things, if a man believes any thing, he commits no fault by believing, though he understands that he knows not the thing which he believes. For I believe that in times past, most wicked conspirators were put to death by the power and authority of *Cicero*: but this I do not onely not know, but also I know assuredly that I can by no means attain unto the knowledge thereof, To be opinative or to be led by opinion, is for two causes an unseemly



seemly thing : First, because he cannot learn a thing, if it be to be learned, that hath perswaded himself that he knows it already. And secondly, for that rashnesse is of it self a sign or token of an ill disposed minde. For although any one thinks that he knows that which I said touching *Cicero* ( as there is nothing that can hinder him from learning it ) yet because he can have no certain knowledge of it, and for that he understands not, That there is a great difference, whither any thing be comprehended by certain reason of mind, which we say is to understand, or whither it be committed to common fame or writing, to be profitably believed by posterity, he erres indeed; and there is no errour but hath its foulness and deformity. Wherefore that we understand we attribute it to reason : that we believe, to authority ; and that we are opinative,

to

to errour and mistaking : but every one that understands doth also believe : and so doth every one that is opinative : but not every one that believes, understands : and no man understands that is opinative. If therefore these three kinds be referred to those five sorts of men whereof we made mention a little before, to wit, to the two approved kinds which we put in the first place, and to the other three vicious kinds ; we find that the first kind ( which is those that are happy ) doth believe truth it self : and that the second kind ( which is those that are desirous and lovers of truth ) doth believe authority : in both which kinds the believers deserve praise. But in the first of the vicious kinds ( that is of those that think they know that which they know not ) there is indeed a faulty credulity. The other two disallowed kinds ( that is, both those

those that seek after truth with a despair of finding it out, and they that seek not after it) do believe nothing; and this is onely in things belonging to some doctrine or discipline, for how a man can believe nothing in the other actions of his life I understand not. Albeit even amongst those that affirm that in their actions they follow probable opinions, some there be that will seem rather not able to know any thing, then to believe nothing. For who doth not believe that which he doth approve? Or how is that which they follow profitable, if it be not approved? Wherefore there may be two kinds of those that oppose the truth: the one that opposeth knowledge onely, and not faith: the other that condemneth both the one and the other. But whither any can be found that use such proceedings in humane affairs, I am wholly ignorant. These things

things are spoken that we may understand, that believing the things which we do not as yet fully know nor understand, we are vindicated and defended from the rashness and temerity of opinative men. As for them that say that we ought to believe nothing, but that which we know, they have onely regard to the name of opinion, which I confesse is but base and ignominious: but if any one will consider attentively, that there is a very great difference between these two things, whither a man thinks that he knows a thing, or whither being moved by some authority, he believes that which he understands that he knows not, he shall certainly shun and avoid the crime both of error, inhumanity and pride.

*Observation.*

*S. Augustine* in his first book  
of

of Retractations and fourteenth Chapter, would have those words. (*The one which hath already found out the true Religion which we ought to judge most happy and most blessed*) is to be understood, that they are most blessed not in this life, but in that which we hope for, and unto which we go by the way of Faith, for (saith he) they are to be conceived to have found out that which is to be sought for, who are there already, whither we by seeking and believing, that is by embracing the way of Faith do desire to arrive.

And again he affirms that those words: To understand great and worthy and divine things, it is a most blessed thing, ought to be referred to eternall beatitude.

And upon these words: (There is a great difference whither any thing be comprehended by certain reason of mind, which we say, is to

to understand : or whither it be committed to common fame, or writing to be profitably believed by posterity ; ) and upon theſe : ( That we underſtand we attribute it to reaſon : that we believe to authority ) he maketh this explication : This is not ſo to be underſtood that in common diſcourſe we ſhould be afraid to ſay we know that which we believe by credible witneſſes, for when we ſpeak properly, we are onely ſaid to know that which we comprehend by firm reaſon of mind. But when we ſpeak with words more fit to be commonly uſed, as the Scripture alſo ſpeaketh, we make no doubt to ſay, that we know both that which we perceive by our corporall ſenſes, and which we believe upon the report of credible witneſſes, but yet ſo that we underſtand what difference there is between the one and the other.

C H A P.

## C H A P. XII.

*That it is the safest way to Believe Wise men.*

**I**F that which is not known ought not to be believed, I ask then how can children obey parents and embrace them with mutuall love and affection, whom they may believe not to be their parents; for that who is their father, it cannot be known by reason, but it is believed upon the word and authority of the Mother: and as for the Mother, she often is not believed, but Midwives, Nurses and Servants: For if her child may be stoln from her and another put in the place, cannot she deceive being deceived? and yet notwithstanding we believe, and that without any doubt and staggering at all, that which we confesse we cannot know: and unless this were  
so,

so, who sees not but that Piety the most holy tye and bond of mankind would be violated and defiled by a most proud wickednesse and offence? For who, though he be a mad man, can think him worthy of blame, who doth perform his obliged duties unto those whom he believes to be his parents, although indeed they were not? On the contrary, who will not think fit to have him cast out of the society of men, who will not love those which perhaps are his true parents, for fear lest he should love those that are false ones? Many arguments may be brought to shew that nothing at all remains safe and secure in humane society. if once we are resolved to believe nothing which we cannot know nor understand. But now hear that whereby I am confident I shall at the present more easily draw and perswade thee, that seeing the question



stion is concerning Religion, that is about the worship of God, and the knowledge of Divine things ) those are lesse to be followed, and hearkned unto, who most readily promising reason, do forbid and prohibite us to believe. No man doubts, but that all men are either fools or wise men ; I call not those wisemen here, that are prudent, ingenious, and witty but those that are endued with as firm and certain a knowledge both of Divine and Humane things as man is capable to receive, and do lead their lives and frame their manners conformable thereunto : but as for others , how learned or unlearned soever they be, or whether they deserve to be praised or dispraised for the manner of their lives, I repute and account them in the number of fools : which being so, what man, though but of a slender understanding doth not plainly see , that

it

it is more wholesome and profitable for fools to obey the precepts and commands of wise men, then to frame and order their lives according to their own judgements and fancies? For every thing that is done, if it be not rightly done, it is a fault: nor can any thing be by any means rightly done, which doth not flow and proceed from right reason; now right reason is virtue it self; But amongst what sorts of men is virtue to be found, but in the mind of a wise man? wherefore the wiseman onely offends not; but every fool offends, unlesse it be in those actions wherein he doth obey a wise man; for such actions do proceed from right reason, nor is the fool to be accounted Master (as I may say) of his own actions, he being as it were but the instrument or servant of the wise man. Wherefore if it be better for all men not to  
of-

offend then to offend : verily all  
fools would live better if they could  
be servants to wise men. And if this  
without doubt be fit and expedient  
in things of lesse moment, as in buy-  
ing or tilling a field , in marrying a  
wife, in the education and breeding  
of children, and finally in the man-  
aging of private affairs : much more  
is it expedient in matters of Religi-  
on. For Humane things are both  
more easie to be known then Di-  
vine : and in all things that are  
more holy and more excellent, we  
sinne so much the more grievously  
and dangerously. by how much we  
owe unto them a greater honour, re-  
verence and respect. Wherefore  
thou seest that from hence forth there  
remains nothing more for us to do,  
so long as we are fools. but, if we  
desire to lead a good and a religi-  
ous life, to seek out wise and pru-  
dent men, that by obeying of them

F

we

we may not so much feel the domination of folly, whilst it is in us, and at the length we may become wise men our selves.

*An Observation.*

S. *Augustine* in his first book of Retractions, and fourteenth chapter adviseth that his division of men into wise men and fools, is to be understood of men after they come to the use of reason, whereby they are distinguished from beasts, as we say all men desire to be blessed, wherein little children cannot be included for they cannot yet desire it.

CHAP. XIII.

*That Religion takes her beginning from Believing.*

**H**ERE again ariseth a question of great difficulty: for how shall

shall we that are fools be able to find out a wise man, seeing that divers do indifferently challenge that name unto themselves, although almost none dare presume to do it openly, when as they do so disagree amongst themselves about those things, in the knowledge whereof wisdom doth consist, that it is necessary to think that either none of them are wise men, or that there is but one certain wiseman. But when a fool enquires who that is, truly I see not by what means he can be plainly discerned and perceived: for a man cannot know any thing by any signs whatsoever, unless he knows the thing it self, whereof these be the signs; but a fool knows not wisdom. For wisdom is not like gold and silver and such like things, which thou mayest both know when thou seest, and yet not enjoy and possess them: he that

wants wisdom cannot see nor behold it with the eye of his mind: for all the things which we perceive with our corporall senses, are outwardly proposed and presented unto us; and therefore we may behold strange and externall things with our eyes albeit we have not any of the things, nor any thing of that kind: but that which is perceived by the understanding, is inwardly in the mind, and it is nothing else to have it, but to see and behold it. But a fool wants wisdom, and therefore knowes it not, for he cannot see it with his eyes; for he cannot see it and not have it: and he cannot have it and still continue and remain a fool: wherefore he knows it not, and whilst he knows it not, he cannot know it in another place: and therefore no man so long as he remains a fool, can by most certain knowledge find out a wise man, by obeying of  
whose

whose precepts and commands he may be freed from so great an evil as folly is. Now it is God onely that can give satisfaction to this mighty difficulty, and afford remedy for this great evil; and because our question is about Religion, unlesse we both believe that there is a God, and that he gives assistance to humane minds, we ought not indeed to inquire and seek for true Religion. For what do we desire to find out at length by so great an endeavour? What wish we to attain unto? Whither do we long to arrive? Is it unto that thing which we believe not to have a being, nor to belong and appertain unto us? Nothing is more perverse then such a mind. When thou durst not beg a favour of me, or with impudence durst crave one dost thou come to demand how Religion may be found out, when thou thinkest not that there is a God.

and that we care not whither there be any or no? What if it be so great a matter. that unlesse it be diligently sought for, and with all might and power it cannot be found out? What if the extream difficulty of finding out the meaning and understanding of that which shall be found out doth vex and trouble the mind of the seeker? For what is more pleasant and familiar to our eyes, then this light is? and yet after long obscurity and darknesse they cannot endure it. What is more fit and commodious for a body that is consumed and exhausted with sicknesse, then meat and drink? Yet we see that those that are upon recovery are restrained and kept back that they may not presume to feed so plentifully as well men do, lest by a full diet they should return to their former disease. I speak of those that are recovering their health: but  
what



what do we not enforce the sick men themselves to eat something? which is so great a trouble unto them, that certainly they would not obey us, did they not believe that they shall escape that sicknesse thereby. When therefore wilt thou settle thy self to a most painfull and laborious search? When wilt thou adventure to take so great care and labour upon thee, as this businesse doth deserve, when as thou dost not believe that there is any such thing as that which thou seekest? Wherefore it was rightly instituted and ordained by the majesty of Catholick discipline, that before all things they should be induced and periwaded to believe, that come to receive and embrace Religion.

## CHAP. XIV.

*That Christ himself chiefly exalted belief.*

**S**Eeing my discourse is concerning those that desire to be called Christians, I pray tell me what reason can that heretick alledge unto me? What can he say to draw me from Believing, as from a rash and inconsiderate thing? If he commands me to believe nothing, then do I not believe that there is any true Religion in the world: and because I do not believe that there is any such thing, I do not seek after it. But he (as I conceive) will shew it to the seeker; For so it is written: He that seeks shall find. Wherefore I would not come to him that forbids me to believe, unless I believed something. Is there any greater madnesse, then that I should dis-  
please

please them onely with a belief which is supported by no knowledge, and yet that belief alone hath brought me to the self same man? What shall I say, but that all Hereticks do exhort us to believe Christ? Can they be more opposite and contrary to themselves? Wherein they are to be pressed two manner of wayes. First they are to be asked, where is the reason which they promised, where the reprehension and blaming of rashnesse where the presumption of science and knowledge? for if it be an absurd thing to believe any one without reason why dost thou expect, why dost thou go about to have me believe any one without reason that I may more easily be led by thy reason? Will thy reason build any thing that is firm & stable upon the foundation of temerity & rashnesse? I speake according to them whom we discontent & displease by belie-

ving. For to believe before reason, when thou art not yet fit to conceive and understand it, and by faith it self to prepare the mind to receive the seeds of verity and truth, I judge it to be not onely a most wholesome and profitable thing, but also so necessary, that thole that have sick and feeble minds cannot recover their healths without it : which because they conceive to be a ridiculous thing and full of rashnesse, it is impudently done of them to perswade and exhort us to believe Christ. Moreover, I confesse that I have already believed Christ, and have perswaded my self, that that is true which he hath said, although this my belief be supported by no reason. This is the first lesson O heretick which thou wilt teach me ; but because I have not seen Christ himself, how he vouchsafed to appear amongst men, who is publicly  
re-

reported to have been seen even by the eyes of common people give me leave a little to consider with my self upon whose words I have believed, that there was a Christ, that being already guarded and fortified by such a faith, I may give ear and hearken unto thee; I perceive that I believed and gave credit unto none, but to a settled and confirmed opinion, and to a most renowned fame and report of people and nations: these people also I see in all places to be in possession of the secrets and mysteries of the Catholick Church. Why shall not I then chiefly enquire of them diligently what Christ hath commanded. by whose authority being moved, I have already believed that Christ hath commanded some profitable thing? Wilt thou better expound unto me what Christ hath said? whom I would not think to have been, or now to be,  
if

if thou didst recommend it unto me to be believed. This therefore (as I said) have I believed upon a famous report of men, confirmed with consent and antiquity: but you who are both so few, and so turbulent, and so new, it is certain you can produce and bring forth nothing which may deserve credit and belief. And therefore what a madnesse is this in thee (to say) Believe them (the known multitude of Christendome) that we ought to believe Christ, but learn of us (Monichians) what Christ hath said: Why so I beseech thee? Verily, if that known multitude should fail, and could teach me nothing: I should much more easily perswade my self, that I ought not to believe Christ at all, then that I ought to believe any thing concerning him of any others, but of those by whose means I first believed him. O mighty confidence

fidence ; or rather folly ! I will (sayst thou) teach thee what Christ hath commanded , in whom thou art already perswaded to believe. What if I did not believe in him at all, couldest thou teach me any thing concerning him ? But (sayst thou ) it behooves thee to believe. What, upon your warrant and recommendation ? No (sayst thou) for we do by reason lead those which do already believe in Christ. Why then shall I believe in him ? Because it is a grounded report, was it grounded upon you, or upon others ? Upon others sayst thou. Shall I believe them first, and be afterwards taught and instructed by thee ? Peradventure I ought to do so, were I not above all things admonished by them not to come at all unto thee : for they say that you hold pernicious doctrines. Thou wilt answer, they lie. How then may I believe them  
con-

concerning Christ whom they have not seen : if I may not believe them concerning thee whom they will not see ? Here sayest thou, Believe the Scriptures. But all Scripture, if being new and unheard of, it be alledged or commended but by a few and hath no reason to confirm it, receives no credit nor authority at all, but those that alledge it : wherefore if you that are so few and unknown commend those Scriptures unto me, I refuse to believe them : besides also you proceed against your promise, rather by commanding belief, then giving any reason thereof. Here again (for the authority of Scriptures) thou wilt call me back to the known multitude of Christendome, and to common report. Restrain at length thy obstinacy, and I know not what unruly appetite of worldly fame : and rather admonish me to seek out the chief rulers of this known



known multitude, and to enquire for them diligently and painfully, that rather I may learn something of them touching these Scriptures: who if they were not I should not know whither any thing ought to be learnt at all or no. As for thee, return into thy corner and lurking-hole, and delude us no more under a shew and pretence of truth, which thou endeavourest to take away from them, unto whom thou grantest authority and credit: and if they also deny, that we ought not to believe Christ, unlesse an undoubted reason can be rendred thereof, they are not Christians. For certain Pagans do alledge that against us, foolishly indeed, but yet not contrary nor repugnant to themselves. But who can endure that those men should profess that they belong to Christ, who strongly affirm that nothing ought to be believed, unlesse most

evident reason can be given even unto fools, concerning God and divine matters? But we see that Christ himself (as that history teacheth which they also believe) desired nothing more principally, nor more earnestly, then that he might be credited and believed: when as they with whom he was to treat about those affairs were not yet fit to learn and conceive the divine mysteries. For to what other purpose did he work so great and so many miracles, he himself also affirming that they were done for no other end but that men might give credit and believe unto him? He led the simple sort of people by belief: you lead them by reason: he cryed out that he might be believed, you cry out against it: he commended those that did believe, you blame and reprehend them. But unlesse he had turned water into wine, to omit his other

other miracles, could men have been brought to follow him, if he had done no such things, but onely taught and instructed them? Or is that word of his not to be regarded: *1 Joh. 14. 1.* Believe God and believe me: Or is he to be blamed for rashnesse in belief, who would not have Christ come into his house, becaute he believed that by his command onely his sick sonne could be cured? *Mat. 8. 8.* He therefore bringing a medicine which was to cure the most corrupt manners, did by miracles winne authority, by authority deserved belief, by belief drew together a multitude by a multitude obtained antiquity by antiquity strengthened and confirmed Religion: which not onely the most foolish novelty of hereticks endeavouring by deccits but neither the antient error of the Gentiles being violently bent against it could in any part abolish or destroy.

## CHAP. XV.

*Of the most commodious way  
to Religion.*

**V** V Herefore albeit I am not able to teach thee, yet do I not cease to warn and admonish thee, that (because many men will seem to be wise, and it is not easie to discern whither they be fools or no) thou beseechest the divine Majesty with very much earnestnesse and fervent desires with sighs and sobs, or also (if it be possible) with weeping and tears to free and deliver thee from the evil of errour, if thou desirest to lead a blessed and an happy life. Which may more easily be brought to passe, if thou wilt willingly obey his commands which he hath been pleased to have confirmed and strengthened by so great an authority of the Catholick Church.

Church. For seeing that a wise man is by his mind so united unto God that nothing is interposed and set between them, which may divide and separate them, (for God is truth, and no man is to be accounted a wise man that doth not attain to the knowledge of truth) we cannot deny but that the wisdom of man is interposed as a certain medium between his folly and the most sincere truth of the Divine Majesty. For a wise man according to the ability which he hath received, doth imitate God: and a fool hath nothing nearer unto him which he may profitably imitate and follow, then a wise man: when because (as I said) it is not easie to understand by reason, it was necessary that certain miracles should be proposed and set before mens eyes (which fools do use much more commodiously then their understandings) to the end that  
the

the life and manners of men moved with authority, might first be purged and made clean, and so they might be enabled to understand reason. And therefore when as man was to be imitated, and yet no confidence to be placed in him: how could the Divine Majesty shew greater signs of his favour and liberality then that the sincere eternall, and unchangeable wisdom of God, unto whom it behoves us to cleave and adhere should vouchsafe to take humane nature upon him? who did not onely do those things, which might serve to invite us to follow God: but did also endure and suffer those things, whereby we were discouraged from following of him. For whereas no man can obtain the most certain and chiefest good, unless he doth fully and perfectly love it, (which by no means will be brought to passe so long as men fear  
the

the miseries of the body, and the things that are subject to fortune and chance) he by his wonderfull birth and admirable works hath purchased for us love and charity: and hath excluded terrour and fear by his death and resurrection. And finally he hath shewed himself to be such an one in all other things (too long to be here expressed and set down) that we may know and perceive hereby how farre the divine clemency can reach and be extended, and how farre mans infirmity can be elevated and extolled.

## C H A P. X V I.

*That Miracles do procure Belief.*

**T**HIS, believe it, is a most wholesome authority: this at the first is a withdrawing of our minds from an earthly habitation: this is a conversion from the love of this world

to

to the true God. It is onely authority which moveth fools to make haste unto wisdom. So long as we cannot understand sincere things, it is indeed a miserable thing to be deceived by authority: but truly it is more miserable, not to be moved thereby. For if the Divine Providence doth not rule and govern humane affairs, we ought not to busie and trouble our selves about Religion: but if even the frame and species of all things, which we must believe proceeds and flows from some fountain of the truest beauty, doth as it were publickly and privately exhort all the more noble and braver spirits both to seek God, in I know not what inward conscience and to serve him: we ought not to despair, but that the same God hath constituted and ordained some authority, upon which if we lean and rely as upon a sure step, we may be  
ele-



elevated and lifted up unto him. This authority, (reason being set aside, which to understand to be true and sincere, it is a very hard matter for fools to do, as I have often said) doth move and excite us two manner of wayes : partly by miracles, and partly by the great number and multitude of followers. It is certain that a wise man needs none of these things, but now we are discoursing how we may become wise men, that is, how we may cleave and adhere unto the truth : which is a thing that doubtlesse cannot be done with a foul and impure mind : the uncleanness whereof, is (to expound it briefly) the love of all things whatsoever besides it self and God : from which filth by how much any one is more purged and cleansed, by so much the more easily doth he behold the truth. And therefore to desire to see the truth that thou mayst  
cleanse

cleanse the mind , when therefore it ought to be cleansed, that thou mayest see the truth , is certainly a perverse and a preposterous thing. Wherefore to a man that is not able to behold the truth that he may be made fit to see it , and may suffer himself to be purged and cleansed , authority is at hand, which without doubt receives her strength and vigour partly by miracles, and partly by the number and multitude of followers , as I said a little before. A miracle I call any hard or unwonted thing whatsoever, which appears above the expectation and power of the wonderer. In which kind nothing is more fit for the common people, and for men that are absolutely sottish and foolish, then that which is applyed and proposed to the senses. But these again are divided into two sorts : for some there be that onely move men to wonder  
and

and admiration : and others which besides do winne and purchase great favour and good will. For if any one should see a man fly, he would onely wonder at it, because it is a thing which besides the beholding of it, yields to the spectatour no commodity nor profit. But if any one being afflicted with a grievous and desperate sicknesse, shall so soon as the disease is commanded to depart, recover his health, he shall overcome the wonder of the cure by the charity of the curer. Such things were done as many as were sufficient, when God appeared to men in the shape of a true man : The sick were cured, *Mat. 9. 6, 13, 15, 16. Mat. 9. 7, 22. Mar. 3. 5, 10. Joh. 4. 53.* the leprous were cleansed ; *Mat. 8. 3. Mar. 4. 2. Luke 5. 3. & 7. 22.* going was restored to the lame, *Mat. 11. 5.* sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, *Luke 18. 42. Joh. 9. 7.*

G

The

The men of that time saw water turned into wine, *Joh. 2. 9.* five thousand people filled with five loaves of bread, *Mat. 14. 20, 21.* men walking upon the sea, *Mat. 14. 25. Joh. 6. 19. & 21. 7.* and the dead rising from death to life, *Luke 7. 15. & 8. 55.* So some miracles were done for the cure of the body by a more manifest benefit, and some for the cure of the soul by a more hidden sign, but they were all for the help of mankind by the testimony of the Divine Majesty : thus did the Divine Majesty then draw unto it the straying souls of mortall men. Why (sayst thou) are not these things done now ? Because they would not move unlesse they were wonderfull, and if they were common and usuall they were not wonderfull. For bring unto me a man when he first sees the courses of day and night, and the most constant order of celestially things

things, the 4. changes of the yeare, the falling and returning of the leevess unto the trees, the infinite vertue of seeds, the beauty of light, the varieties of colours, sounds, smells and tastes, and if wee can but speak with him, we shall find him wholly astonished, and quite overcome with the sight of these miracles: and yet we despise and we make and account of all these things, not because they are easily known (for what is more obscure then the causes of them?) but for that we are accustomed frequently to see them, those things are therefore most fitly done, that a multitude of beleivers being gathered together and propagated by them, profitable authority might be converted into customes themselves.

*An observation.*

S. Augustine in his first book of his Retractions and 14. Chapter

alledgeth these words: (why sayst thou) are not these things done now? because they would not move, unlesse they were wonderfull, and if they were common and usuall, they were not wonderfull) and expounds them thus: This I said because not so great nor all miracles are done now, but not that none are also now done.

## CHAP. XVII.

### *The Consent of Nations beleeving in Christ.*

**A**LL customes have such vertue power to winn the love and affection of men, that we sooner can condemne and detest even the things that are naught and wicked in them then forsake or change them: and this for the most part comes to passe, when as our unlawfull appetites and desires have gotten a dominion and  
pre-

predominancy over us : doest not thou think that great care hath been taken about the affaires of mankinde, and that they are put into a good state and condition, that not only divins most learned men doe argue and contend, that nothing that is earthly, nothing that is fierie finally, nothing that is perceptible by the corporall senses ought to be worshipped and adored for God, but that he is to be prayed unto, entreated and supplicated only by the understanding or intellectuall power : but also that the unskillfull multitude of both sexes doth in so many and so divers nations both beleeve it and publish it? *that there is continency and forbearance of meates, even to the most slender diet of bread and water, and fastings, not for one day only, but also continued for divers dayes together : that there is chastity even to the contempt of mar-*

riage and issue : that there is patience even to the contemning of crosses and flames : that there is liberality even to the distribution of patrimonies to the poore : and finally, so great a disesteeme and contempt of all things that are in this world, that even death it self is wished and desired. Few there are that do these things, fewer that doe them well and prudently : yet the people doe approve them, hearken unto them, and like them : yea they love and affect them ; and not without some progresse of their mindes towards God, and certain sparks of piety and vertue, they blame and reprehend their owne weakenesse and imbecillity that they cannot doe these things. This the divine Providence hath brought to passe by the predictions of the Prophets, by the humanity and doctrine of Christ, by the voyages of the Apostles, by  
the



the contumelies, crosses, bloud and death of Martyrs, by the laudable and excellent lives of Saints, and by miracles done at convenient times in all these things worthy of so great matters and vertues. *When as therefore we see so great help and assistance from God, and so great fruit and entcrease thereby, shall we make any doubt or question at all of retyring into the besome of that Church, which even to the confession and acknowledgement of mankinde from the Sea Apostolike by succession of Bishops, hath obtained the sovereignty and principall authority, heretiks in vain barking round about it, and being condemned partly by the judgement of the people themselves, partly by the gravity of Councels, partly also by the majesty and splendour of miracles? Unto which not to graunt the chiefe place and preheminance, is either indeede an extreme impiety,*

or a very rash and a dangerous arrogancy, for if there be no certain way for the minds of men to wisdom and salvation, but when faith prepareth and disposeth them to reason; what is it else to be ungratefull unto the divine Majesty for his aide and assistance, but to have a will to resist an authority which was gained and purchased with such labour and paines? And if every art and trade, though but base and easy, requires a teacher or master that it may be learned and understood: what greater expression can there be of rash arrogancy and pride, then both to have no minde to learne the books of the divine mysteries from their interpreters, and yet to have a minde to condemne the unknown.

## CHAP. XVIII.

*The Conclusion by way of exhortation,*

**VV** Herefore if either reason or our discourse hath any wayes moved thee : and if thou hast a true care of thy self (as I beleeve thou hast) I would have thee to hearken and give eare unto me, and with a pious faith, a cheerefull hope, and sincere charity to addresse thy self to good Masters of Catholick Christianity : and to pray unto God without ceasing and intermission: by whose only goodnesse we were made and created, by whose justice we are punished and chastized, and by whose clemency we are freed and redeemed, by which means thou shalt neither want the instructions and disputations of most learned men, and those that are truly Christian,

G 5

stian, nor books, nor cleare and quiet thoughts, whereby thou mayst easily find that which thou seekest. And as for those verball and wretched men (for how can I speake more mildly of them) forsake them altogether: who found out nothing but mischiese and evill, whilst they seek to much for the ground thereof. In which question they stirre up oftentimes their hearers to enquire and search, but they teach them those things when they are stirred up, that it were better for them alwayes to sleep, then to watch and take great pains after that manner, for they drive them out of a lethargy or drowly evill and make them frantike: between which diseases, whereas both are most commonly mortall: yet neverthelesse there is this difference, that those that are sicke of a lethargy doe die without troubling or molesting others: but the frantike

like man is dreadfull and terrible unto many, and unto those especially that seek to assist him. For neither is God the author of evill, nor hath it ever repented him to have made any thing, nor is he troubled with a storme of any commotion or stirring of the minde, nor is a particle or piece of earth his kingdome: he neither approves nor commands any heinous crimes or offences, he never lies. For these and such like things did move and trouble us, when they did strongly oppose them and inveigh against them, and fained this to be the doctrine of the old Testament which is a most absolute falsehood and untruth. Wherefore I graunt that they doe rightly blame and reprehend those things. What then have I learned? what thinkest thou, but that when they reprove those things, the Catholike doctrine is not reprehended? so that the truth  
which

which I learned amongst them, I hold and reteyne: and that which I conceived to be false and untrue, I refuse and reject but the Catholick Church hath also taught me many other things, whereunto those men being pale and without bloud in their bodies, both grosse and heavy in their understandings cannot aspire, namely that God hath no body, that no part of him can be perceived by corporall eyes, that nothing of his substance and his nature is any wayes violable or changeable, or compounded or framed, which things if thou grauntest me to be true (as wee ought not to frame any other conceit of the divine Majesty) all their subtle devises and shifts are subverted and overthrown. But how it can be, that God hath neither caused nor done any evill, and that there neither is, nor ever hath been any nature and substance, which  
he

he hath not either produced or made, and yet that he frees and delivers us from evill, is a thing approved upon so necessarie reasons and grounds, that no doubt at all can be made thereof: especially by thee and such as thou art, if so be that to their good wits they joyne piety, and a certaine peace and tranquillity of a minde, without which nothing at all of so great matters can be conceived and understood, and here is no report of great and large promises made to no purpose, and of I know not what Persian fable, a tale more fit to be told to Children then to ingenious and witty men, and as for truth it is a farre other thing then the Manichees do foolishly imagine and conceive, but because I have made a farre longer discourse then I thought to have done, let me here end this booke: wherein I would have thee to remember that I have

not

not yet begun to refute the Manichees, and impugne those toys: nor to have expounded any great matter of the Catholick doctrine, but that my only intent was to have rooted out of thee if *I* could, the false opinion of true Christians which hath been maliciously or unskilfully insinuated unto us, and to stirre thee up to the learning of certaine great and divine things. Wherefore *I* will put a period to this worke: and if it makes thy mind more quiet and contented *I* shall peradventure be more ready to serve thee in other things.

**F I N I S.**



or  
t-  
ur  
ve  
e  
ch  
y  
ce  
at  
ll  
if  
d  
e  
r